

Ku Forgiveness

by Mike Tucker *

In the movie, *The Interpreter*, Sylvia Broom (Nicole Kidman) is an interpreter for the United Nations who overhears an assassination attempt on President Zuwanie of the African nation of Mantobo. Sylvia was born in Mantobo, and Zuwanie was responsible for the deaths of her parents when she was an adolescent.

When the Secret Service question Sylvia about what she has overheard, they doubt her story and suspect that she is actually the one who is plotting Zuwanie's death. Secret Service agent Tobin Keller questions Sylvia:

"How do you feel about Zuwanie? Never mind 'I don't care for him.'"

"I feel disappointed," replies Sylvia.

"That's a lover's word," Keller responds. "What about rage? Of all the people that I have looked into since this thing started, the one with the darkest Zuwanie history is you. It was his land mines that killed..."

"Shhh," says Sylvia, placing her fingers over his lips. "We don't name the dead. Everybody who loses somebody wants revenge on someone. On God if they can't find anyone else. But in Africa, in Mantobo, the Ku believe that the only way to end grief is to save a life.

"If someone is murdered, a year of mourning ends with a ritual we call the drowning-man trial. There's an all-night party beside the river. At dawn, the killer is put in a boat, he's taken out in the water, and he's dropped. He's bound so that he cannot swim.

"The family of the dead then has to make a choice. They can let him drown, or they can swim out and save him. The Ku believe that if the family lets the killer drown, they'll have justice, but they'll spend the rest of their lives in mourning. But if they save him, if they admit that life isn't always just, that very act can take away their sorrow. Vengeance is a lazy form of grief."

If the Ku are right – and I believe they are – then forgiveness is the better way. And praise God that forgiveness doesn't have to come through our own strength or even through some manmade ritual. Forgiveness is a gift that comes straight from His heart to ours.

With Love,
Mike

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